

People Born Leap Year Day Have Few Birthdays

BY JOHN ELFRITH WATKINS.
BARRING some sudden skid by Dame Nature from the even tenor of her way, about 9,000 babies will be born within our land Thursday next. And as Thursday next, thanks to Pope Gregory, is Leap Year day—February 29—these youngsters cannot celebrate their first birthday until the year of our Lord, 1916.

Upon their birthday cakes, when they were "sweet sixteen," they will be entitled to light four candles, and they will have to wait until the year 1919 for their twenty-first birthday to come around. Such of them as are born great enough, who achieve greatness enough or who have sufficient greatness thrust upon them to warrant the observance of their one hundredth birthday—as we this month observed that of Dickens—they cannot expect this celebration to take place until Anno Domini 2324.

Some Odd Paradoxes.
Indeed, some mighty odd paradoxes will occur this coming week as a result of this most eccentric of all the days in our calendar.

For instance, over in Clapham, a suburb of London, a father will celebrate his eleventh birthday anniversary, and his own daughter her twenty-sixth, both within the week. He was born February 29, 1864, and she in February, 1886.

And in Roxborough, a suburb of Philadelphia, there is a couple who—all upon this coming Leap Year day—will celebrate three important events—her twelfth birthday, his fourteenth birthday and the seventh anniversary of their wedding. They were married on his seventh and her fifth birthday. It all came about in this way: On February 29, 1882, Herr James Scherer was born in Prussia, while on February 29, 1880, Fraulein Pauline Gross was born in Baden-Baden. The odd date worked its magic upon them, for destiny called them both to Wurttemberg, although neither, up to this time, knew the other. Herr fate brought them together and the fact that each was child of Leap Year day wrought an affinity between them. In the late seventies they became engaged, but still under the spell of this odd date, February 29, they chose it for their wedding day and waited impatiently for it to come around. This it did in the leap year 1880, and their nuptials came off as per schedule. Then they emigrated to America, where they were happy ever afterward. At their receptions, celebrating their birthdays and wedding anniversaries, they limit their list of guests to twenty-nine, which has ever been their lucky number.

Leap Year Day "Twins."
Another coincidence which may further convince some readers that there is an affinity between persons born upon this vagabond date was this:

February 29, 1880, that same date upon which James Scherer married Pauline Gross, there was born, in New Jersey, a baby christened John A. Berry, and upon precisely the same date, in far-off Idaho, Frank W. Rowell first saw the light. Although neither of them dreamed of the other's existence, their twin destiny called them both to the army, in which they are now serving as brother captains. Thursday they will celebrate their seventh birthday. If you will watch the army register closely, you will note that all officers reaching for age are placed upon the inactive list upon their sixty-fourth birthday. But if the date of retirement of Captains Berry and Rowell fall on their sixty-fourth birthday they will be entitled to active service and full pay as long as they live, for that event will not fall due until the year 2162.

Two other Leap Year day twins are the Rev. Arthur Henry Faber, Canon of York Cathedral, England, and Thomas Edie Hill, author of Chicago. Both were born February 29, 1832, and although they will be eighty next Thursday, it will be their nineteenth birthday. Mr. Hill tells me that he has been so busy throughout his life to celebrate even one of his nineteen birthdays.

It is an interesting coincidence that the Rev. Mr. Faber should be Canon of York Cathedral, which was once the seat of St. Oswald, patron saint of Leap Year day. Oswald, an Anglo-Saxon prelate, became Archbishop of York in 642, and was canonized for his zeal in reducing the Angles of England to the complete domination of Rome.

He was awarded Leap Year day on the calendar of the Catholic Church because he died on the day before the

THOMAS EDIE HILL.

GEORGE D. PERKINS.



PROFESSOR WAMBAUGH.

J. A. HENSHALL.

ELIZABETH MCCRACKEN.

calends of March—this is the last day of February, 1912, which was a leap year. After the revision of the calendar by Pope Gregory this day became the 29th of February, although no one knows it as such in Oswald's time or until centuries afterwards. But because of the designation St. Oswald has his day only once in four years, while the other saints have theirs annually.

Great Composer One of Them.

The subject of Leap Year day twins cannot be passed without mention of the most distinguished pair that has adorned the past. These were Rossini, the great composer, and Karl Ernst von Baer, the naturalist. Both were born February 29, 1792. Those who may have grown rusty in their memory of Rossini's achievements will have their interest awakened by the recollection that he composed the great opera, "William Tell," which, by the way, he gave to the world before his tenth birthday.

"This being my eighteenth birthday I will now turn over a new leaf and disregard the frivolities of youth and the indiscretions of my teens," said Rossini February 29, 1810, when he was twenty-two. But his estimate of his birthday was incorrect, as he had counted the year 1800 as a leap year—like, like 1900, it was not (for years designated by two ciphers are leap years only when their first two numbers can be equally divided by four—for which reason the year 2000 will be a leap year). In 1868, the year of his death, the great composer represented himself as nineteen, although he had celebrated his eighteenth birthday that year. His death on Friday, the 13th of November, was the fulfillment of a lifelong morbid fear of both Friday of each week and the 13th day of each month.

His twin leap year luminary, Von Baer, was a distinguished professor of zoology and later librarian of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. He published a work on embryology which made a great splash in the scientific world, and which established his reputation as one of the greatest naturalists of the nineteenth century. A coincidence, also, attached to his case. In the early twenties he held the chair of zoology at Konigsberg, where, at the same time, the chair of theology was held by the distinguished German pedagogue, Friedrich Dinter, another Leap Year day baby, born in 1760.

Two other great geniuses, born Feb-

ruary 29, were Leo von Klenze, the German architect, who was given to the world in 1784, and Morten-Muller, the Norwegian landscape painter, who followed in 1829.

Living Authors on the List.
But let us return to our living Leap Year day babies:

Our young author, Elizabeth McCracken, is of this category, having first seen the light at New Orleans only a few leap years ago. Indeed, her birthday Thursday next would be designated by a number so small that dolls and toys would be the only appropriate gifts to send her. Her success as a writer, despite this discrepancy of birthdays, is not due solely to the fact that she was a Leap Year day baby, but that she was a prodigy, for she began to write for publication soon after her second birthday.

Then there is our modern Isaac Walton, Dr. James Alexander Henshall, author of "The Gods and Little Fishes," and a whole shelf of other books, which, if a confirmed fisherman, you know nearly as well as your "Com-pleat Angler." Although he has been turning out these works for more than thirty years, the size of his birthday next Thursday will be so small that skates, shiny sticks or a bob sled would seem to be the only birthday gifts suitable for the occasion. Those who would thus favor him will find him in charge of the government fish hatchery at Tupelo, Miss.—a station immortalized by John Allen, the former humorist of Congress, who, in asking his Republican rivals to appropriate for the establishment, brought down the House of Representatives by the plea, "Mr. Speaker, countless millions of unborn fish are clamoring to this Congress for the honor of being hatched at Tupelo!"

Having been conceived, thus, in cleverness, his most that the Tupelo hatchery should be directed by a clever genius.

Scholars and Politicians.
Another author and M. D. who will celebrate on the same scarce date is Dr. John Elingham Roberts, Philadelphia's distinguished surgeon and medical professor, who has written a long list of medical text-books. At the time of his seventeenth birthday he was publishing a profound treatise. He will be entitled to only thirteen candles on his birthday cake this year.

Only thirteen will adorn that of Harvard's learned professor of law, Dr. Eugene Wambaugh, whose many legal

text-books are well known to our rising young barristers. The fact that he, along with Dr. Henshall and Miss McCracken, are all clergymen's children doubtless will set students of heredity to work in search of a new law bearing upon the relationship of rectories and Leap Year day babies.

That the planets governing the destinies of these rare youngsters are as favorable to political careers as to more profound callings is proved by a number of instances. There is Dr. T. M. Jameson, naval officer of the port of Chicago, who was Republican national committeeman from Illinois at the Bryan-McKinley campaign days. Having come into the world February 29, 1848, he will celebrate his fifteenth natal day in the western metropolis Thursday. And in the same city and at the same time, George Buchanan Armstrong, former governor of Ohio, journalist, music and art critic, will reach another milestone. On his last birthday, that of 1908, his five brothers presented him with a loving cup, which will be again passed around Thursday next. Former Representative George Douglas Perkins, who sat for eight years in the Federal Congress, and who has edited the Sioux City Journal since the sixties, will on the same date be entitled to his seventeenth birthday party. He has been an editor since his fifth birthday. When I asked him the other day whether he regarded the fact that he was a Leap Year day baby as a lucky or unlucky circumstance, he replied:

"Yes, I was born on the 29th of February. It was in the log cabin year, remembered by all students of the history of their country. In the early years of my life the peculiarity of my birthday was not impressed on my mind. I believe I am making more of it now than ever before. Under the common reckoning I have had too many birthdays, and I am willing to divide."

"On the whole, I think I have benefited. I have had something coming to me every twelvemonth, and about every fourth year a little extra has been provided out of the goodness of family and friends."

Twenty women, of the friends of Mrs. Julian Woodcock were her guests on Tuesday afternoon, when she entertained most delightfully at bridge at her home on Haywood Street. At the conclusion of the games attractive prizes were awarded, after which those who were hungry were served with dainty refreshments.

Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Schochet entertained the members of the Blomberg-Rapport club at their home, 1000 Woodmont, on Tuesday afternoon. The house was decorated with pink and white carnations and an enjoyable salad course was served.

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Progressive whist was delightfully played Monday evening in the home of Dr. and Mrs. C. K. Riddle, on Newbern Avenue. Miss Sillie Boyater of Townville, was the honor guest, and Mrs. R. H. Freeman and Mrs. Jack Cussons were the hostesses. There were five tables, Mrs. Freeman making highest score, and Mrs. L. L. Newbold, of Elizabeth City, coming in for the bonus award.

C. Trenholm McClanahan gave to the young people of Raleigh Monday night in Ramey ballroom a german that was the most largely attended affair in the city in a long time. There were forty couples participating, under the leadership of Gordon Smith and Miss Emmis Dreyer. Friday evening in the ballroom there was a Leap Year dance, in which a half-hundred or more young people participated, with Miss Nannin Rogers and Howell Smith leading.

Dr. J. M. Fleming, as president, and J. B. Chesire, Jr., as secretary of the Wake county alumni of the University of North Carolina, were in charge of a delightful smoker Monday evening in the rooms of the Chamber of Commerce.

Mrs. W. S. Wilson entertained Friday afternoon the Five Hundred Club. Mrs. E. C. Bullock was hostess for a delightful auction bridge party and luncheon Friday morning at her home in Hillsboro Street. There were six tables for the auction bridge.

Misses Corinne and Jassamine Gantt, of Burlington, have been the guests of Misses Carrie and Ellen Gray-

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which was given at the Western Hotel, the parlors of which were tastefully decorated for the occasion. Various games were indulged in and refreshments were served.

Mr. and Mrs. M. D. Long were entertained Thursday afternoon, the occasion having been the twenty-first anniversary of their marriage. The affair was arranged by Miss Dorothy Long, their daughter, and they were not informed of the party until the guests arrived. A musical program was rendered, bridge whist was indulged in, and the guests spent the evening in a most pleasant manner.

Miss Matilda Garlick, of Cincinnati, O., who is spending the winter here, entertained Wednesday afternoon "Ravencliff" in honor of Miss Geraldine Lamson, who is spending some time in this city as the guest of her brother, Roger Lamson.

Ten of the girl friends of Miss Grace Allen were her guests on Wednesday afternoon, when she entertained at luncheon.

The Asheville debutantes were the guests of Mrs. Alfred S. Barnard on Tuesday, when she gave a delightful dinner in the evening in their honor. The house was handsomely decorated for the affair, which was a very enjoyable one.

Mrs. Arthur M. Fields was the hostess to a number of friends at her home on Grove Street Tuesday afternoon, when she entertained at a bridge whist party.

RALEIGH

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.] Raleigh, N. C., February 24.—Mrs. R. T. Gray was hostess for the Olla Podrida Book Club Tuesday afternoon.

The centenary of Dickens was the theme for a most profitable meeting of the Johnstone Book Club Tuesday afternoon with Mrs. A. E. Turner.

The invitations have been issued for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. William Harrison Rand, of this city, Monday, March 1, at their home on South Blount Street.

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ham in the home of Major W. A. Graham, Commissioner of Agriculture, here the past week, and have been the recipients of many social attentions.

GORDONSVILLE

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.] Gordonsville, Va., February 24.—Miss Ada Cowherd, of "Montebello," returned home this week after spending a most enjoyable month with relatives and friends in North Carolina and Richmond.

Miss Martha Graves, of "Weston," is

improving after an illness of two weeks.

Miss Lottie Estes, of Thistlewood, has gone to Washington, where she will go in training as nurse in the Child's Hospital.

Charles F. Russell, of Charlottesville, is visiting Mrs. B. S. Brent, at her home, "Montebello." Manning Harper spent last week at his father's. Mrs. Harper is located in Alexandria.

R. G. Cowherd, although still suffering from his accident of two weeks ago, is much improved and hopes to be able to return to Orange shortly.

LENTEN SPECIALS

Any housewife may, with the helpful suggestions in our store displays, make her Lenten table pleasing in variety, in spite of the diet restrictions. This week we announce specially interesting displays of Fish of all kinds.

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